control the commanding heights of the economy and to meet progressively and serve better the needs for development of the economy in conformity with national policy and objectives as prevailing at that time.

(c) Rapid expansion of bank branches, particularly in the rural, unbanked and neglected centres, significant increase in bank deposits facilitated by wide geographical coverage, pre-emption of bank credit in favour of priority sectors like rural credit, agriculture, small scale industries, exports etc. are significant achievements in this direction. Reforms are an ongoing process, and incorporate changes to meet changing situations and emerging needs, while continuing to focus on the interests of the public at large.

Investment by US Firms in Insurance Sector in India

1296. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Ambassador to India, has indicated that many US firms are keen to invest in the insurance sector in India;

(b) if so, the number of US firms which are so interested and the amount of investment expected;

(c) whether Government are aware that the insurance sectors in US and other developed countries are not running well; and

(d) if so, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Government is aware of the Statement made by the US Ambassador to India which has appeared in the press.

(b) The IRDA, when it is constituted, would be considering the applications received for issue of licences to new insurance companies. The amount of investment would depend upon the number of joint venture companies given licence by IRDA.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.